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Intelligence Memorandum

North Vietnamese Defense Minister Giap's Analysis of the War--I

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
20 September 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

North Vietnamese Defense Minister Giap's Analysis of the War--I

1. The first part of a lengthy analysis of the war by North Vietnamese Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap has been received. This part of the article was serialized in the North Vietnamese press from 14 to 16 September and Hanoi radio began broadcasting the first installment on 17 September. Only eight of twelve parts of the first installment are available at the present time.

2. The first installment appears to be similar to the kind of article that Giap writes periodically. Such articles have become a regular feature of North Vietnamese propaganda during past years, one in July 1965, another in January 1966, and the last in January of this year. In general they are designed to provide Vietnamese Communist cadre, military personnel, and the populace the latest official view of the war. Although the articles are designed primarily for propaganda purposes, they provide useful insights into Hanoi's over-all thinking about US military strengths and weaknesses.

3. In the present article Giap attempts to take a bird's-eye view of US military objectives

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence.

and strategy in South Vietnam since 1965 and tries to explain Communist counterstrategy in the most optimistic and confident terms. He begins, as usual, with an analysis of current US difficulties. According to Giap, US strategy in 1965 was designed to "annihilate the regular units of the Liberation Army" in two major operations, one north of Saigon and another in the "high plateau." Both of these operations were roundly defeated by the Communists, according to Giap; he boasts that not a single "small-size unit of the Liberation main force" suffered a significant defeat.

4. In discussing Communist counteroffensives, Giap emphasizes the growing significance of the political struggle in the South as a means of frustrating US ambitions. As an example, he cites the Buddhist-led demonstrations in the northern part of the country in the spring of 1966. Giap gives the impression that the Communists and their Liberation Front deserve all the credit for this three-month period of civil disorder, whereas available information indicates that the Communists muffed opportunities to exploit these disturbances effectively to promote Communist objectives.

5. Giap claims that the Communist military answer to the US was to open up a "new battlefield" in the fall of 1966. This operation, according to his analysis, forced the US to bring reinforcements into the northern provinces from other areas. The defense minister dismisses the bombings of the North as ineffective, noting that they had served only to harden the determination of the North Vietnamese people to assist the South. He also points to the cost to the US in money, pilots, and aircraft.

6. The general tone of the article is one of complete confidence in ultimate victory. Giap argues that the military situation has never been more favorable from the Communist point of view. He calls his forces "invincible" and asserts that foreign aid is "increasingly effective." He also claims that the North Vietnamese people are "resolved to heighten their determination to fight" and to "advance toward final victory."

7. Although there is nothing unusual in this first part of the first installment of Giap's new article, it should be noted that he frequently saves his main points, such as current and future Communist strategy and estimates of future US actions, for final sections.

8. Comments on the remainder of Giap's article will follow as it becomes available.